(b) Yes Sir, the Cranes are reportedly being hunted in Afghanistan and Pakistan during their migratory flight.

(c) and (d) Studies reveal that the population of Siberian Cranes migrating to India is endangered on account of hunting and destruction of habitat in the migratory route outside India. Siberian Cranes are included in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act and thus receive highest degree of protection. They winter in the Keoladeo Ghana National Park in which their habitat is free from all disturbances. India is also a party to the M.O.U. for the conservation of Siberian Cranes under the International Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS). Under this M.O.U. cooperative action is being taken to protect the species and its habitat with all the range states and relevant international conservation organisations.

Irregularities in recruitment in ICAR

2234. SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there were some irregularities in the direct recruitment of Section Officers and Assistants in Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Head Quarter, as reported in the "Kuber Times", dated 3rd November, 1996;

(b) if so, whether any inquiry committee has been constituted to investigate the irregularities; and

(c) if so, the findings of the inquiry committee made in this regard and action taken by the Department/Council against the officers/ staff responsible for the lapses?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) Some allegations in this regard have been brought to the notice of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

(b) The complaints have been carefully examined by Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board and it has been established that the allegations are not substantiated. However, Director General, I.C.A.R. has been asked to personally examine it.

(c) In the light of (b) above, does not arise.

Performance of public sector fertilizer plants

2235. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS & FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government attention has been drawn to certain reports which appeared on 13th November, 1996 indicating that Indian public sector fertilizer plants are operating well;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government's move to privatise this sector has been dropped in view of (a); and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SIS RAM OLA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is a fact that with the exception of sick units, Central Public/Cooperative Sector Fertilizer Enterprises have been performing well. The overall capacity utilisation of these enterprises in 1995-96 was 101.6% in the case of nitrogen and 95.5% in the case of phosphate.

(c) and (d) There is no specific proposal at present for disinvestment of Government equity in Central Public Sector Undertakings of the Fertilizer Sector. However, three such enterprises, namely. The Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Limited, National Fertilizers Limited and Madras Fertilizers Limited have been included in the list referred by the Government to the Disinvestment Commission for consideration under the terms and conditions of the Commission.

Amount spent on modernisation of stations in Gujarat

2236. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the expenditure incurred on the modernisation of various railway stations located in Gujarat during the last three years;

(b) the details of funds allocated and the expenditure incurred on different works year-wise;

(c) extent of actual achievements made;

(d) whether the Government have received any complaints pertaining to irregularities committed in execution of construction work during the said work/ period; and

(e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) Allocation of funds for the modernisation of various railway stations are provided to the Railway Zones according to their requirements and no state-wise bifurcation of allocations are maintained. During 1993-94 to 1995-96, expenditure of Rs. 8.79 crore, 7.06 crore and 9.35 crore respectively were incurred by Western Railway on various passenger amenity works including modernisation of stations in the state of Gujarat Amenities commensurate with the volume of passenger amenities are provided at stations in Gujarat. These are also augmented wherever so warranted by growth in passenger traffic. Works taken up in this regard are progressing as per schedule.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Death of Children due to Malnutrition in Melghat, Maharashtra

2237. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report captioned, "Malnutrition snuffs out 500 lives in Melghat", Amravati (Maharashtra);

(b) if so, whether Government have verified the reports of death of hundreds of children in the Melghat tribal-belt due to malnutrition; if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the Central aid, if any, given to rid the tribal belt of the malady, indicating both short-term and long-term measures taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R. BOMMAI): (a) Government is aware of the Report.

(b) According to a report of Government of Maharashtra, a total of 212 deaths of pre-school children occured during the period May to July, 1996 in Amravati district. The causes of deaths have been identified, as high-Fever pneumonia, acute respiratory infections, dysentry, diarrhoea, low birth weight etc. The children who died belonged to all grades of nutritional status ranging form normal to severe malnutrition. A field visit made by DWCD to Amravati district during September 22-25, 1996 confirmed deaths of pre-school children.

(c) The Department of Women & Child Development is involved in the implementation of the ICDS project which provides supplementary nutrition among other services to the pre-school children. There are 14 ICDS projects in district Amravati. Of these, 10 ICDS projects including the two in Dharni and Chikhedara are fully operational. During the current year an amount of Rs.101.92 lakhs has already been released to the State, in first two instalments, towards the ICDS projects in District Amravati.

Decision to Increase the Quantum of Subsidy on Fertilizers

2238. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the two day's Chief Ministers' Conference held in July, 1996 has decided to increase the quantum of subsidy on fertilizers substantially to ensure a balanced use, resulting in better productivity and making it available at reasonable prices to farmers;

(b) the rate of concessions announced;

(c) the extent to which the farmers will be helped by this concession in subsidy; and

(d) whether it will have a greater impact on the economy?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) and (b) In the Chief Ministers' Conference held in July,